

We are indebted to the many visiting ornithologists and birders who have over the years contributed significantly to the refuge avian data base. The accuracy of future checklists depends in part upon the continued support of such professional and amateur bird enthusiasts. Please report significant observations to refuge headquarters at the address or phone number listed at the end of this brochure.

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The following is a list of bird species whose normal range does not encompass eastern Massachusetts and that are of extremely rare refuge occurrence, some having been recorded only once.

Fulvous Whistling Duck	Black-headed Grosbeak
Greater White-fronted Goose	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Garganey	Bullocks's Oriole
Pacific Loon	Pine Grosbeak
Eared Grebe	Hoary Redpoll



• Bobolink	3	5	2	
• Red-winged Blackbird	5	5	2	1
• Eastern Meadowlark	1	1	1	1
• Rusty Blackbird	1		1	
• Common Grackle	5	5	2	1
• Brown-headed Cowbird	5	4	2	1
• Orchard Oriole	1	1		
• Baltimore Oriole	2	3	2	

_____	• Purple Finch _____	4	3	2	1
_____	• House Finch _____	4	3	2	1
_____	White-winged Crossbill _____	1		1	1
_____	Common Redpoll _____	1		1	2
_____	Pine Siskin _____	1		1	1
_____	• American Goldfinch _____	5	4	3	2

• House Sparrow	3	3	2	2
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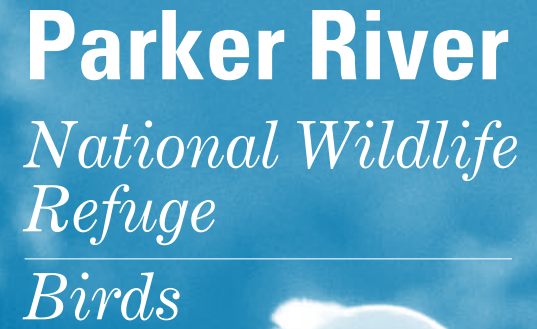
The following is a list of resident or migratory bird species of eastern Massachusetts that are of extremely rare refuge occurrence.

Cackling Goose
Tundra Swan
Canvasback
Ruffed Grouse
Northern Bobwhite
Cory's Shearwater
Cattle Egret
Black Vulture
Golden Eagle
Yellow Rail
Pomarine Jaeger
Long-tailed Jaeger
Gull-billed Tern
Royal Tern
Black Skimmer
Dovekie
Common Murre
Atlantic Puffin
Barn Owl
Eastern Screech-Owl
Barred Owl

Red-headed Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Acadian Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
Fish Crow
Common Raven
Boreal Chickadee
Sedge Wren
Bohemian Waxwing
Golden-winged Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Lark Bunting
Henslow's Sparrow
Blue Grosbeak
Evening Grosbeak



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Parker River

National Wildlife Refuge

Birds

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May 2009

A Refuge for Birds

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1942 to provide feeding, resting, and nesting habitat for migratory birds. Located along the Atlantic Flyway on the Massachusetts coast, the refuge is of special significance to waterfowl and shorebirds, including the federally threatened piping plover. Consisting of 4,662 acres (1,883 hectares) of diverse wetland and upland habitats, the refuge also supports a great variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and other wildlife.



Northern Harrier
©J. Haydock

Trails and Other Facilities Provide Excellent Viewing, Several Wheelchair Accessible

Parker River refuge is accessible by motor vehicle and foot over mostly gentle terrain. Several miles of foot trails meander through dune, shrub/thicket, freshwater marsh, and other refuge habitats. Observation towers and platforms afford commanding views of the refuge and surrounding lands and waters. A 6.3 mile (10.1 kilometer) roadway runs the length of the refuge and provides several pull-offs. For your safety, roadside parking is prohibited and the 25 mph (40 kmph) speed limit is strictly enforced.



Wheelchair accessible birding sites include the Salt Pannes Wildlife Observation Area, the Bill Forward Bird Blind, the North Pool Overlook, the 0.3 mile (0.5 kilometer) Pines Trail, and the observation platforms overlooking the beach and ocean at parking lots 1 and 7.

Birding Best in Spring, Summer, and Fall

Parker River refuge is noted as one of the finest birding areas in the nation with more than 350 species recorded. While any season can produce a memorable visit, spring, summer, and fall offer the best birdwatching opportunities. Each season's highlights are described below.

Spring (March - May)

Piping plovers first return in March to nest on the ocean beach.¹ Purple martins begin to arrive in mid-April and are most easily observed from parking lot 1 at provided compartment houses. Raptor migration is best in April and early May with prime viewing available in parking lot 1. Top single-day flights of American kestrel, sharp-shinned hawk, and other species consist of several hundred birds. Peak migratory bird diversity occurs during the latter half of May. At

¹ Each year the Refuge beach is closed to all public entry April 1 to mid-late August to provide undisturbed nesting habitat for the piping plover. Sections of the beach not being used by nesting birds may be reopened beginning July 1.

this time a day's tally may result in one hundred or more species. Major waves of songbirds, especially warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers, are the main attraction. Hellcat Wildlife Observation Area and the Pines Trail are popular viewing sites.

*Summer
(June - August)*

Good birding continues into early June with songbird migration still in progress. By early July, southbound shorebird migrants begin to arrive with numbers peaking in August. Viewing is normally best at the Salt Pannes Wildlife Observation Area at high tide and Stage Island, Bill Forward, and North Pools when water levels are low. Beginning in mid-August, large numbers of herons during some years congregate at Bill Forward Pool and other refuge roost sites. In even greater concentrations, migrating tree swallows can be observed in marsh, beach, and other open habitats. Also at this time, warblers, vireos, and other fall songbird migrants become apparent.



American Goldfinch
©J. Haydock

*Fall
(September -
November)*

Passerine migration continues into early September and shorebird diversity is at its height. Peregrine falcons occur most regularly from mid-September through November. During October, sizeable numbers of yellow-rumped warblers can be found in refuge thickets. In October and November, dabbling ducks dominate at the freshwater pools, complemented here and in deeper water areas by a diversity of divers. Mid-October through November is best for viewing northern gannets with strong onshore ocean winds most favorable.

*Winter
(December -
February)*

Emerson Rocks (parking lot 7) attracts wintering loons, grebes, and sea ducks including common eider, white-winged scoter, and long-tailed duck. Also at this tidal area, purple sandpipers can sometimes be observed on exposed rocks. Two winter specialties are snowy owl and rough-legged hawk, found most commonly in refuge grasslands and other open habitats. Northern shrike, another winter feature, is most frequently located in roadside trees and shrubs.

Please remain an unobtrusive observer by viewing birds and other wildlife from an appropriate distance and staying within designated public use areas.

**Arrive Early
to Avoid
Disappointment**

During the warmer months, the refuge sometimes fills to capacity and is subsequently closed for several hours. Arriving early may help you avoid this inconvenience.

Checklist Provides Seasonal Probabilities of Seeing Individual Species

This checklist provides information on the likelihood of seeing individual bird species through the seasons. This likelihood is based on the species' observability and is dependent upon many factors including its size, color, behavior, habitat preference, habitat conditions, relative abundance, and frequency of occurrence.

Prepared in accordance with the Seventh Edition of "The American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds," this brochure lists 306 species which have been observed on or from the Plum Island section of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. It also includes two separate lists of birds of extremely rare occurrence.

Seasons

Sp Spring March - May
S Summer June - August
F Fall September - November
W Winter December - February

Sighting Likelihood

5 very good to excellent
 4 good to very good
 3 fair to good
 2 poor to fair
 1 very poor to poor

The probability of seeing a bird may vary within a season. The value assigned to each bird in this checklist represents the highest value that generally occurs within that season.



Black-crowned Night-Heron
 ©J. Haydock

For specific information on Massachusetts birds concerning such factors as seasonal abundance, habitat preference, and early and late seasonal dates, refer to "Birds of Massachusetts" by Richard R. Veit and Wayne R. Petersen, and the "Field List of Essex County Birds," 7th edition, by the Essex County Ornithological Club.

Additional Symbols

- represents a species known or suspected to nest on the refuge
- bold** indicates a federally listed threatened or endangered species

Song Sparrow
 © J. Haydock



SWANS – GEESE – DUCKS

	Sp	S	F	W
— Snow Goose	2	1	3	3
— Brant	3	1	2	1
— Canada Goose	5	5	5	5
— Mute Swan	5	4	4	2
— Wood Duck	1	2	1	-
— Gadwall	5	4	4	2
— Eurasian Wigeon	1	1	2	1
— American Wigeon	2	1	3	1
— American Black Duck	5	4	5	5
— Mallard	5	5	4	4
— Blue-winged Teal	3	3	3	-
— Northern Shoveler	2	1	3	1
— Northern Pintail	4	2	4	3
— Green-winged Teal	5	3	5	2
— Redhead	-	-	1	1
— Ring-necked Duck	2	-	1	1
— Greater Scaup	1	1	2	1
— Lesser Scaup	1	-	2	1
— King Eider	1	-	-	1

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Common Eider _____	3	1	4	5
___ Harlequin Duck _____	1	-	1	1
___ Surf Scoter _____	2	1	2	2
___ White-winged Scoter _____	3	1	4	5
___ Black Scoter _____	3	1	3	3
___ Long-tailed Duck _____	4	1	2	4
___ Bufflehead _____	3	-	3	3
___ Common Goldeneye _____	3	-	2	4
___ Barrow's Goldeneye _____	1	-	-	1
___ Hooded Merganser _____	2	1	3	3
___ Common Merganser _____	2	-	1	1
___ Red-breasted Merganser _____	4	1	3	4
___ Ruddy Duck _____	1	1	2	1

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

___ • Ring-necked Pheasant _____	1	1	1	1
___ • Wild Turkey _____	1	1	1	1

LOONS

___ Red-throated Loon _____	3	1	3	3
___ Common Loon _____	4	2	4	4

GREBES

___ • Pied-billed Grebe _____	2	1	2	1
___ Horned Grebe _____	3	-	2	4
___ Red-necked Grebe _____	2	-	2	2

FULMARS - SHEARWATERS

___ Northern Fulmar _____	1	-	-	1
___ Greater Shearwater _____	-	1	1	-
___ Sooty Shearwater _____	-	1	1	-
___ Manx Shearwater _____	1	1	1	-

STORM-PETRELS

___ Wilson's Storm-Petrel _____	1	2	1	-
___ Leach's Storm-Petrel _____	1	1	1	-

GANNETS

___ Northern Gannet _____	2	2	3	2
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CORMORANTS

___ Great Cormorant _____	1	-	2	2
___ Double-crested Cormorant _____	5	5	4	1

BITTERNS – HERONS – EGRETS

___ American Bittern _____	2	1	2	2
___ • Least Bittern _____	1	2	1	-
___ Great Blue Heron _____	4	4	4	2

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Great Egret _____	5	5	4	-
___ Snowy Egret _____	5	5	4	-
___ Little Blue Heron _____	1	2	1	-
___ Tricolored Heron _____	1	2	1	-
___ • Green Heron _____	2	2	1	-
___ • Black-crowned N-Heron _____	2	3	2	1
___ Yellow-crowned N-Heron _____	1	1	1	-

IBISES

___ Glossy Ibis _____	2	3	1	-
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NEW WORLD VULTURES

___ Turkey Vulture _____	2	1	2	1
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OSPREY - HAWKS - EAGLES

___ • Osprey _____	4	4	2	1
___ Bald Eagle _____	1	1	1	2
___ • Northern Harrier _____	5	3	5	5
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk _____	3	1	2	1
___ Cooper's Hawk _____	2	1	3	1
___ Northern Goshawk _____	1	1	1	1
___ Red-shouldered Hawk _____	1	-	1	1
___ Broad-winged Hawk _____	1	-	1	-
___ Red-tailed Hawk _____	2	2	2	3
___ Rough-legged Hawk _____	2	-	2	3

FALCONS

___ • American Kestrel _____	4	1	2	3
___ Merlin _____	3	1	3	3
___ Peregrine Falcon _____	3	1	4	3
___ Gyrfalcon _____	1	-	1	1

RAILS

___ • Clapper Rail _____	2	3	1	-
___ • King Rail _____	1	2	1	-
___ • Virginia Rail _____	2	3	1	1
___ • Sora _____	2	3	1	-
___ • Common Moorhen _____	1	1	1	-
___ • American Coot _____	1	1	1	1

PLOVERS

___ Black-bellied Plover _____	2	4	4	1
___ American Golden-Plover _____	1	1	2	-
___ Semipalmated Plover _____	2	4	4	-
___ • Piping Plover _____	3	3	1	-
___ • Killdeer _____	5	5	2	-

OYSTERCATCHER

___ American Oystercatcher _____	1	1	-	-
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	Sp	S	F	W
AVOCETS				
___ American Avocet _____	-	1	1	-

SANDPIPERS

___ Greater Yellowlegs _____	5	5	5	1
___ Lesser Yellowlegs _____	3	4	3	-
___ Solitary Sandpiper _____	1	1	1	-
___ • Willet _____	4	5	2	-
___ • Spotted Sandpiper _____	2	3	2	-
___ Upland Sandpiper _____	1	1	1	-
___ Whimbrel _____	1	2	2	-
___ Hudsonian Godwit _____	-	1	2	-
___ Marbled Godwit _____	-	1	1	-
___ Ruddy Turnstone _____	2	2	2	1
___ Red Knot _____	1	2	2	-
___ Sanderling _____	2	3	4	2
___ Semipalmated Sandpiper _____	2	5	4	-
___ Western Sandpiper _____	-	1	2	-
___ Least Sandpiper _____	3	4	3	-
___ White-rumped Sandpiper _____	2	3	3	-
___ Baird's Sandpiper _____	-	1	1	-
___ Pectoral Sandpiper _____	1	2	2	-
___ Purple Sandpiper _____	1	-	1	2
___ Dunlin _____	2	1	4	2
___ Stilt Sandpiper _____	1	3	2	-
___ Buff-breasted Sandpiper _____	-	1	1	-
___ Ruff _____	1	1	1	-
___ Short-billed Dowitcher _____	2	4	3	-
___ Long-billed Dowitcher _____	-	2	3	1
___ Wilson's Snipe _____	2	1	1	1
___ • American Woodcock _____	3	2	1	-
___ • Wilson's Phalarope _____	2	2	1	-
___ Red-necked Phalarope _____	1	1	1	-
___ Red Phalarope _____	1	-	1	-

JAEGERS – GULLS – TERNS

___ Parasitic Jaeger _____	1	1	1	-
___ Laughing Gull _____	1	2	2	-
___ Little Gull _____	1	2	1	1
___ Black-headed Gull _____	1	1	1	1
___ Bonaparte's Gull _____	2	3	2	1
___ Ring-billed Gull _____	3	4	4	3
___ • Herring Gull _____	5	5	5	5
___ Iceland Gull _____	1	-	1	1
___ Lesser Black-backed Gull _____	1	1	1	1
___ Glaucous Gull _____	1	-	1	1
___ Great Black-backed Gull _____	5	4	4	5
___ Black-legged Kittiwake _____	1	-	1	2
___ Caspian Tern _____	1	1	1	-
___ Roseate Tern _____	1	2	1	-
___ • Common Tern _____	3	5	2	-
___ Arctic Tern _____	1	1	1	-

	Sp	S	F	W
___ • Forster's Tern _____	1	1	1	-
___ • Least Tern _____	2	4	1	-
___ Black Tern _____	1	1	1	-

AUKS

___ Thick-billed Murre _____	-	-	-	1
___ Razorbill _____	1	-	1	2
___ Black Guillemot _____	1	-	1	1

PIGEONS – DOVES

___ • Rock Pigeon _____	3	3	3	3
___ • Mourning Dove _____	5	4	3	3

CUCKOOS

___ • Black-billed Cuckoo _____	2	2	1	-
___ Yellow-billed Cuckoo _____	1	1	2	-

TYPICAL OWLS

___ • Great Horned Owl _____	1	1	1	1
___ Snowy Owl _____	2	-	1	3
___ Long-eared Owl _____	1	-	1	1
___ Short-eared Owl _____	2	-	1	2
___ Northern Saw-whet Owl _____	1	-	1	1

NIGHTJARS

___ Common Nighthawk _____	1	1	1	-
___ Whip-poor-will _____	1	1	1	-

SWIFTS

___ Chimney Swift _____	2	2	2	-
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HUMMINGBIRDS

___ • Ruby-throated Hummingbird _____	2	2	1	-
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KINGFISHER

___ • Belted Kingfisher _____	2	2	2	1
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WOODPECKERS

___ Red-bellied Woodpecker _____	1	-	1	1
___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker _____	1	-	2	-
___ • Downy Woodpecker _____	3	3	3	3
___ Hairy Woodpecker _____	1	1	1	1
___ Northern Flicker _____	4	1	3	1

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

___ Olive-sided Flycatcher _____	1	1	1	-
___ Eastern Wood-Pewee _____	2	1	1	-
___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher _____	1	1	1	-
___ Alder Flycatcher _____	1	1	1	-

	Sp	S	F	W
___ • Willow Flycatcher _____	2	4	1	-
___ Least Flycatcher _____	2	1	1	-
___ • Eastern Phoebe _____	3	2	3	-
___ • Great Crested Flycatcher _____	2	2	1	-
___ Western Kingbird _____		1	1	-
___ • Eastern Kingbird _____	4	5	2	-

SHRIKES

___ Northern Shrike _____	2	-	1	3
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VIREOS

___ White-eyed Vireo _____	1	-	1	-
___ Blue-headed Vireo _____	3	-	2	-
___ Yellow-throated Vireo _____	1	-	1	-
___ Warbling Vireo _____	1	1	1	-
___ Philadelphia Vireo _____	1	1	2	-
___ • Red-eyed Vireo _____	2	2	3	-

JAYS – CROWS

___ • Blue Jay _____	4	2	4	3
___ • American Crow _____	5	4	4	4

LARKS

___ • Horned Lark _____	2	1	2	4
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SWALLOWS

___ • Purple Martin _____	4	4	1	-
___ • Tree Swallow _____	5	5	4	1
___ • Northern Rough-winged Swallow _____	2	1	1	-
___ • Bank Swallow _____	2	3	2	-
___ • Cliff Swallow _____	1	1	1	-
___ • Barn Swallow _____	3	3	2	-

TITMICE – CHICKADEES

___ • Black-capped Chickadee _____	5	3	4	4
___ Tufted Titmouse _____	1	-	1	1

NUTHATCHES

___ Red-breasted Nuthatch _____	3	1	3	2
___ White-breasted Nuthatch _____	1	1	1	1

CREEPERS

___ Brown Creeper _____	2	1	2	1
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WRENS

___ Carolina Wren _____	2	1	2	1
___ • House Wren _____	1	2	1	-
___ Winter Wren _____	2	1	1	-
___ • Marsh Wren _____	4	4	3	1

KINGLETS

___ Golden-crowned Kinglet _____	2	-	3	1
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet _____	4	-	3	1

OLD WORLD WARBLERS

___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher _____	2	1	1	-
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THRUSHES

___ Eastern Bluebird _____	1	-	1	-
___ • Veery _____	2	1	1	-
___ Gray-cheeked Thrush ¹ _____	1	-	1	-
___ Bicknell's Thrush ¹ _____	1	-	1	-
___ Swainson's Thrush _____	2	-	1	-
___ Hermit Thrush _____	3	1	2	1
___ Wood Thrush _____	1	1	1	-
___ • American Robin _____	5	5	4	4

MIMIC THRUSHES

___ • Gray Catbird _____	4	5	4	1
___ • Northern Mockingbird _____	4	4	4	3
___ • Brown Thrasher _____	4	4	3	1

STARLINGS

___ • European Starling _____	4	4	4	4
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PIPITS

___ American Pipit _____	1	-	3	1
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WAXWINGS

___ • Cedar Waxwing _____	2	4	3	1
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WOOD WARBLERS

___ Blue-winged Warbler _____	1	1	1	-
___ Tennessee Warbler _____	1	-	1	-
___ Orange-crowned Warbler _____	1	-	1	-
___ Nashville Warbler _____	2	1	2	-
___ Northern Parula _____	3	1	2	-
___ • Yellow Warbler _____	4	4	1	-
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler _____	2	1	1	-
___ Magnolia Warbler _____	3	1	2	-
___ Cape May Warbler _____	1	-	1	-
___ Black-throated Blue Warbler _____	2	1	2	-
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler _____	4	1	4	3
___ Black-throated Green Warbler _____	3	1	2	-
___ Blackburnian Warbler _____	2	1	1	-
___ Pine Warbler _____	2	1	2	-
___ Prairie Warbler _____	1	1	1	-

¹ Precise data not available due to difficulty in differentiating these two species in the field.

	Sp	S	F	W
— Palm Warbler	3	-	2	-
— Bay-breasted Warbler	1	1	1	-
— Blackpoll Warbler	2	1	2	-
— Black-and-white Warbler	3	1	2	-
• American Redstart	3	3	3	-
— Worm-eating Warbler	1	1	1	-
— Ovenbird	2	1	2	-
— Northern Waterthrush	3	1	2	-
— Connecticut Warbler	—	-	1	-
— Mourning Warbler	1	1	1	-
• Common Yellowthroat	3	4	2	-
— Hooded Warbler	1	1	1	-
— Wilson’s Warbler	2	1	2	-
— Canada Warbler	2	1	2	-
— Yellow-breasted Chat	1	1	1	1

TANAGERS

— Summer Tanager	1	-	1	-
— Scarlet Tanager	2	1	2	-

SPARROWS - TOWHEES

• Eastern Towhee	4	4	3	1
— American Tree Sparrow	3	-	3	5
— Chipping Sparrow	2	1	2	-
— Clay-colored Sparrow	1	1	1	-
• Field Sparrow	4	3	2	1
• Vesper Sparrow	1	1	1	-
— Lark Sparrow	1	-	1	-
• Savannah Sparrow	4	3	4	2
— Grasshopper Sparrow	-	1	1	-
• Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow ¹	2	4	2	1
— Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow ¹	-	1	1	-
• Seaside Sparrow	2	2	2	1
— Fox Sparrow	2	-	1	1
• Song Sparrow	5	5	4	4
— Lincoln’s Sparrow	1	1	1	-
• Swamp Sparrow	3	1	2	1
— White-throated Sparrow	4	1	4	3
— White-crowned Sparrow	2	-	2	2
— Dark-eyed Junco	3	-	4	2
— Lapland Longspur	1	-	2	1
— Snow Bunting	2	-	3	2

CARDINALS - GROSBEAKS

• Northern Cardinal	4	3	3	4
— Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	1	1	-
— Indigo Bunting	1	1	1	-
— Dickcissel	1	-	1	-

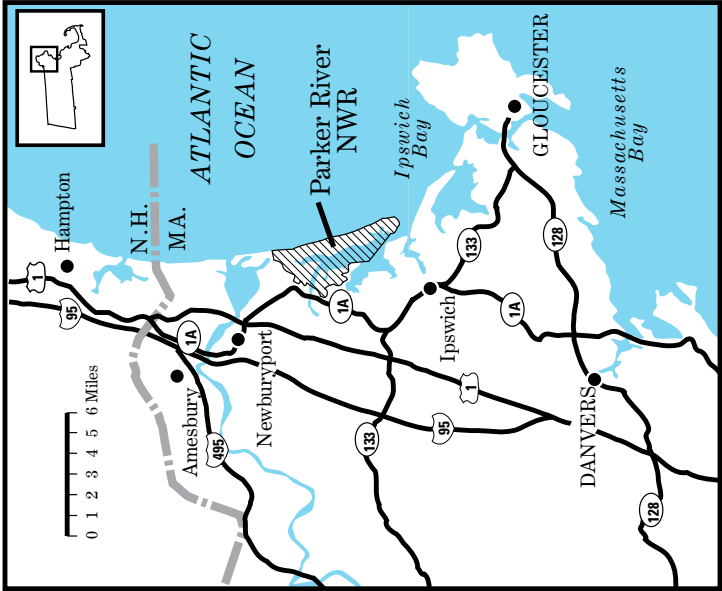
Parker River
National Wildlife Refuge
Newburyport, Massachusetts

Directions: The Refuge is located approximately 32 miles north of Boston and occupies the southern three-fourths of Plum Island. From Route 95 take the Newburyport exit (57) and travel east on Route 113, then Route 1A for a total of 3.5 miles to the intersection with Rolfe’s Lane. Please refer to the map below for further assistance.



LEGEND

- Refuge Headquarters
- Refuge Boundary
- Maintenance Area
- Rest Rooms
- Designated Parking Area
- Boardwalk to Beach
- Boat Ramp
- Observation Tower
- Newburyport Harbor Lighthouse



¹ Precise data not available due to the recent taxonomic “splitting” of the sharp-tailed sparrow.